

What is psittacosis?

Psittacosis is a disease caused by bacteria called *Chlamydia psittaci*. It is a disease of birds that can also affect people.

Who gets psittacosis?

Persons most likely to get Psittacosis are those who handle infected household birds, usually imported psittacine birds (parrots, parakeets). Workers in turkey processing plants have also been infected.

Where are organisms found?

The organisms are found in droppings, secretions and dust from feathers of parakeets, parrots, and love birds; less often in poultry, pigeons, canaries, and sea birds. Birds that appear to be healthy can be carriers and shed the bacteria, particularly when subjected to the stresses of crowding and shipping.

How is psittacosis spread?

Transmission occurs when the bacteria are inhaled from dried bird droppings, secretions, or dust from feathers.

What are the symptoms of psittacosis?

The most common symptoms in humans are fever, headache, feeling of weakness, loss of appetite, muscle aches, chills, sore throat, cough and sensitivity to light. These symptoms can present as a mild flu-like illness or can be very severe, especially in older persons.

How soon after exposure do symptoms appear?

The symptoms generally appear about 10 days after exposure, but can appear as early as 1 week or as long as 4 weeks after exposure.

Do infected people need to be excluded from work or school?

No, but persons who are coughing should be instructed to cough into paper tissues which are then discarded in a sanitary fashion.

What is the treatment for psittacosis?

Antibiotics of the tetracycline group are administered for 10-14 days after temperature returns to normal.

How can psittacosis be prevented?

Controlling the disease in the bird population helps reduce the risk for people. However, birds that seem healthy can shed the bacteria and new birds may reintroduce the bacteria, so prevention depends on properly designed and managed facilities that raise and sell birds and the use of protective clothing, including wearing masks or respirators, and gloves by those working with birds. Sick birds should be diagnosed and treated. If

they are sold while they are being treated, the new owner should be informed and be sure that treatment is completed.

Bird cages should be cleaned regularly with disinfectants (alcohol, Lysol, or bleach solution) and the contents of the cage should be disposed of properly.

